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REVIEWS

NORSK FOLKEKULTUR. *Norsk Folkeminnetidskrift.* Styrkt av Rikard Berge under medverknad av Alexander Bugge, O. Olafsen og Kristofer Visted. Skien, (Norway). I–III, 1915–1917.

Nowhere, perhaps, is there such active productive interest in popular traditions and the culture of the 'folk' as in the Scandinavian countries. The work of the late Moltke Moe in Norway, and of his pupil Axel Olrik in Denmark, has undoubtedly been epoch-making for the study of folk-lore and the entire field of Norse-Germanic mythology. It was of the latter's investigations that Richard Hugo Meyer in his *Allgermanische Religionsgeschichte* said: "Für die altgermanische Philologie ist die Bahn trotz mancher bedeutender Vorläufer eigentlich erst durch Axel Olrik eröffnet."

The ballad, the folk-tale, local story, traditions attached to a clan or a community, the rimes, riddles and rigamaroles of the countryside, the life, the customs and the practices of the peasant, especially those that belong to fixed times as survivals of ancient rites, and the art and the industry of the folk, is the extensive field (folk-culture) to which Scandinavian scholars have often turned, and to which they have made many of the most notable contributions. But in Norway there has, until now, been no journal exclusively devoted to this department of study. There is a mass of collected material, much of it published, and the critical literature is considerable; but these things have for the most part found a place in serials devoted mainly to dialect study or to philology in the wider sense,—while not a little has been issued in individual volumes and pamphlets. *Norvegia*, which was launched in 1884, was planned to serve both fields, but for want of funds ceased publication after the first number had been issued, continuations being issued in 1902-08. *Maal og Minne*, which began publication in 1909 (editor, Magnus Olsen, Christiania), has given some attention to folkloristic material, but its domain is rather linguistic and the critical study of traditional material. There is therefore a place for *Norsk Folkekultur*, a journal in which the collector may find a repository for his collections, and the investigator into such materials for the results of his researches.

In the editor's statement in the first number he lists the kinds of collections that he desires under the following heads (I leave them in the original): *visur, stev, eventyr, gaatur, leikar, ord og ordtøke, slaattar og slaatterim, folketonar, barnesullar og lokkur, segnir og sogur, truir, folkemedecin, haagtidssed, folkekunst*, and finally miscellaneous practices, as in dress, in the preparation of food, in work, etc. Ballads, rimes, riddles, etc., are to be recorded in the local dialect, and this preferably also for the tales and stories. The journal is issued as a quarterly, with a total of a little over 200 pages a year, and occasional supplements. The price is 4 kroner a year.

I may note briefly part of the contents of the numbers issued. G. Bakke treats of old wedding customs in Ryfylke; the Editor prints two versions of the ballad of *Skipar Hølgje* from Telemarken, and he shows that it is in itself an independent ballad, whereas it has hitherto been recorded as part of another ballad; the same author publishes new fragments of other ballads, and has, furthermore, an article on the style of the Norwegian folk-tales; Margrethe

Galtung offers an interesting collection of superstitions from Hallingdal, among them one showing the custom of burial of money with the deceased, "fordi man trodde man skulde faa bruk for dem 'i uppstandelsen'; da var det godt at ha noke at begynde med til at kjøbe seg eigendom for," a belief that is further discussed by S. Eitrem under the title of 'money as an offering to the dead'; the so-called "black-book," or book of magic, which has played a not inconsiderable part in Norwegian superstition in all parts of Norway, is discussed by Kr. Østby. Fragments of a black-book, one of them from the 17th century, from Solør is printed, which contains twelve charms, or magic formulas, mostly for luck in love, or to win in cards, and a score of charms for recovering stolen property, against toothache, to 'fetter' birds, etc. Vol. II, pp. 1-68, one number issued by itself, comprises Alexander Bugge's investigation of the settling of Western Telemarken, a valuable contribution to the history of the settlement of Southern Norway. The study of peasant industries receives a contribution in Wilhelm Lund's "En gammel form for trølaaser." I may also especially speak of Rikard Berge's clear, and in every way excellent, account of the study of the ballad in Norway, which appears in Vol. III, pp. 1-33.

An article entitled "Levninger av gammel kultur i Nordfjord" by Jacob Aaland I wish to mention a little more fully. It is a study of survivals of pagan belief in one of the west coast districts, Nordfjord. Among those treated the evidences of an old sun-cult are especially interesting. As we know, the return of the sun after the long dark winter was eagerly looked for by the peasant. The moment of its coming was holy, and it was observed with appropriate rites and offerings to the sun-god. In the survival before us the housewife took a lump of butter and melted it and spread it on the wall of the house, especially where the sun shone, for "fik solen smør den dagen blev hun blid og mild hele aaret gjennom." In many places the festive moment was accompanied by offerings of some special dish from the storehouse, usually smoked meat (spekekjøtt) and sausage rings. We learn that these observations have been common in Nordfjord down to the last generation.

Other survivals of sun-cult are given, as the baking of a special kind of round cakes for christmas, as "round as the sun." The author also shows how certain supposed 'marks of ownership' and pentagonal symbols are, in their origin, symbols of the sun-circle. There then follows an account of a peculiar and apparently meaningless custom which is shown to go back to a rite in honor of the god of fruitfulness. There stands at Tunold in Nordfjord a rather remarkable stone, clearly so shaped in part by the hand of man. In connection with the practice just mentioned above, the writer now shows this stone to have been a phallic representation, sacred to the god of love and fruitfulness. The real significance of the unusually shaped stone with smoothly rounded top and, a little below this on one side, the transverse furrow, is long ago forgotten, of course; but the piety with which the stone is regarded in the community is a heritage from the age when the stone was holy and occupied an important place in the religious life of the locality.

Other examples of stone cult and several cases of clear tree cult are discussed. One centers about the giant *Hjelmeset oak*, which is still standing-

weathered, twisted, decayed as it is, two hundred years old and more as it must be, but an object of reverence still. And there was the *Aarholm tree*, cut down some fifty years ago when it was about 275 years old, another king of oaks; and similarly the *Skottefuru*, near the quay and bent in the direction of the water, tall and beautiful and magnificent; in its inaccessible top the herons of the country about had always built their nests. This tree was destroyed some fifty years ago, cut down by a drunken wedding guest. But this 'vandal' had little luck later in life, and the people at the farm "regarded this as a righteous punishment of the gods for his evil deed."

GEORGE T. FLOM.